

Dealing with Failure

Thomas A. Edison recorded 1,093 patents. Most of these inventions were impractical or unmarketable. They were failures. But he invented the phonograph, the mimeograph, and the electric light bulb.

- Henry Ford forgot to put a reverse gear in his first car.
 - Albert Einstein failed his university entrance exams at his first attempt
 - When the great Italian tenor, Enrico Caruso, first applied for instruction, the teacher told him his voice sounded like the wind whistling through the window.
-
- Abraham Lincoln was considered by many Americans as a most successful president.
 - It was strange that he was a man marked for failure
 - A man who endured long periods of depression throughout his life.
 - He could barely see out of one eye. He had frequent nervous attacks, severe headaches, indigestion and nausea.
 - Lincoln failed in business in 1831, was defeated for the legislature in 1832. The next year he suffered another business defeat and in 1836 had a nervous breakdown.
 - He failed to be elected speaker in 1838, was defeated for elector in 1840, and for Congress in 1843, as well as in 1848. Lincoln failed to be elected to the Senate in 1855, and was defeated for the Vice Presidency in 1856 and for the Senate in 1858.
 - However, being elected President in 1860, he could afford all those failures. Abraham Lincoln was truly a successful failure.

Luke 5: 1 – 11; John 21: 1 – 11

1) God allows us to fail

- When Jesus chose the location of a boat (very possibly the boat that Peter had fished in the whole night without catching anything) he was very aware of the fact that Peter had just been on a failed fishing trip the whole night. Likewise when he appeared to the disciples on the beach after their unsuccessful fishing trip he was aware of their failure.
 - This would make us wonder why Jesus didn't step in prior to their failures and give them immediate success as He was most capable of doing.
- People are naturally self centered which manifests in various ways for different people
 - Pride, independence, self-sufficiency
- Failure is a major blow to self centeredness – the very aspect of our beings that replaces God as the centre of our world and lives.
 - It must have been a blow to Peter's pride when he failed and then Jesus – a carpenter rabbi – told him what to do and then he was successful.
- We must understand that almost every Biblical leader failed
 - Abraham lied about Sarah
 - Moses killed a man
 - Jacob was a deceiver
 - David committed adultery
 - Elijah was depressed
 - Elisha took revenge
 - Nehemiah beat men and pulled their hair out
 - James and John had an anger problem
 - Peter denied Jesus – and Jesus told him beforehand that he would
- Each of these was used by God to fulfill the destiny of God for their lives.
- Do not get despondent if God has allowed you to fail.

2) Reasons for failure

- God's dealings
 - Moses failed in his original quest to free the Israelites because he wanted to do it his way. God had to deal with him by making him a shepherd for 40 years
 - Peter failed to catch fish so that Jesus could teach him to be a fisher of men.
 - Our failures aren't only task related failures but they can be moral failures as was David's failure when he committed adultery.
 - God had to deal with him to bring him to repentance.
 - Our failures could be because of bad attitudes and God has to deal with those as with Jonah.
 - We could fail because we lack confidence in the abilities that God has given us and he needs to reassure us that he has more confidence in us than we often have in ourselves.
- Bad decisions
 - No one learns to make right decisions without being free to make wrong ones.
 - A young man of thirty-two had been appointed president of the bank. He'd never dreamed he'd be president, much less at such a young age. So he approached the venerable chairman of the board and said, "You know, I've just been appointed president. I was wondering if you could give me some advice." The old man came back with just two words: "Right decisions!" The young man had hoped for a bit more than this, so he said, "That's really helpful, and I appreciate it, but can you be more specific? How do I make right decisions?" The wise old man simply responded, "Experience." The young man said, "Well, that's just the point of my being here. I don't have the kind of experience I need. How do I get it?" Came the terse reply, "Wrong decisions!"
 - If we are scared of making bad decisions we will not make decisions at all which will also lead to failure.
- Doing the wrong thing.
 - Peter was doing a good thing when he was fishing but it wasn't the thing that Gods had purposed for him in his life. It might have been a right at a certain time but now Jesus wanted something else for him.
 - We might start doing something that we had our heart set on and fail. But when we move into a different field we flourish.
 - Are you doing what God wants you to do?
- Doing the right thing in the wrong place
 - Rick Warren relates a story of a friend of his who failed as a pastor in a certain church. No matter what he tried nothing worked. He then took up the pastorate in another church in a different city with completely different dynamics. His church flourished.
 - Are we in the place God wants us to be?

A PERSON WHO FAILS ISN'T NECESSARILY A FAILURE

3) God's purpose is for us to be successful

- Peter listened to Jesus and caught a lot more fish and then went on to be a greater success in catching men for the kingdom
- Moses went on to lead the Israelites out of Egypt
- Abraham went on to become the father of nations
- David became known as a man after God's own heart
- If you have failed ask God what the reason is and what he wants and move forward in a different direction.
- We need to understand that success in God's economy isn't the same as that of the world. The problem is that we still look at the world rather than God as our model and if we don't make it according to the world then we consider ourselves a failure.
- Jesus Christ was the greatest success that the world has ever seen. In worldly standards he was a failure.
- Are determining whether we are a success or failure in God's sight or in the opinion of the world?